

Chapter 18

Rural Development as a Tool of Inclusive Growth Glimpses From India

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ABSTRACT

India is predominantly an agrarian country. Approximately 69% of India's population lives in villages. Hence, it becomes important that a proportionate amount of attention and funds be spent for the betterment of the rural folk. In spite of their being in majority, they have been lagging behind in the fields of education, civic amenities, medical facilities, and economic wellbeing. So, the government of India realize the need of improvement of condition of rural people. Many programs, schemes, and projects have been started for the betterment/upliftment of the living standards of the residents of these villages.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture & Rural Development has been the key mantra for a sustained and long-term economic growth in India. The same is in the sharper focus today with the Government taking keen interest to ensure a comprehensive and visible uplift of this sector through effective implementation of various old and new schemes. ¹ Constant efforts are being made by the Central and State governments for upliftment of the rural society, as well as, to remodel and revolutionise the rural living standards across the country. Further, in order to bridge the gaps between rural and urban India, the Government has also invited the private sectors to participate in the nation building process for bringing about changes in the rural scenario. In India, rural development is an integrated effort to eliminate poverty, and sustain growth across all rural sectors. This includes setting up basic infrastructure and facilities such as medical facilities, schools, and transport facilities, apart from scheme implementation related to improving rural employment, agricultural productivity and rural industrialisation (OIFC, n.d.).

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Besides, some autonomous bodies like District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) and Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) are also working in tandem with the Government for a better 'Rural India'². Of late, rural development has assumed global attention especially among the developing nations. It has great significance for a country like India where majority of the population, around 65% of the people, live in rural areas. The present strategy of rural development in India mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wage and self-employment. This article overviews the role and function of the Government and its' programmes for rural development in India. Science and technological interventions in the field of rural development have been discussed briefly and efforts being made to document some of the appropriate technologies developed by several research institutes, organizations suitable for application in rural areas are listed. Besides, the actual realization achieved during the Xth plan and the proposed target and strategy of the XIth plan have been highlighted to showcase the recent trend of developmental activities under the Ministry of Rural Development (Gangopadhyay, Mukhopadhyay & Singh, 2008).

Rural Development in India is one of the most important factors for the growth of the Indian economy. India is primarily an agriculture-based country. Agriculture contributes nearly one-fifth of the gross domestic product in India. In order to increase the growth of agriculture, the Government has planned several programs pertaining to Rural Development in India. ³Rural development in India has witnessed several changes over the years in its emphasis, approaches, strategies and programmes. It has assumed a new dimension and perspectives as a consequence. Rural development can be richer and more meaningful only through the participation of clientele of development. Just as implementation is the touchstone for planning, people's participation is the centre-piece in rural development. People's participation is one of the foremost pre-requisites of development process both from procedural and philosophical perspectives.⁴

OBJECTIVES

Rural development aims at improving rural people's livelihoods in an equitable and sustainable manner, both socially and environmentally, through better access to assets (natural, physical, human, technological and social capital), and services, and control over productive capital (in its financial or economic and political forms) that enable them to improve their livelihoods on a sustainable and equitable basis. The basic objectives of Rural Development Programmes have been alleviation of poverty and unemployment through creation of basic social and economic infrastructure, provision of training to rural unemployed youth and providing employment to marginal Farmers/Labourers to discourage seasonal and permanent migration to urban areas.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Government's policy and programmes have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor. The Ministry of Rural Development in India is the apex body for formulating policies,

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